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HISTORY OF AGRICULTURE IN MINNESOTA.*

BY JAMES J. HILL.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is a particularly pleasant occasion to see together so many of the old faces, and hardly any other occasion would bring so many of them together. I have often thought that the State of Minnesota was fortunate in the character of the men who came here at an early day and into whose hands the forming of the state was committed. To none of those men can we look with more gratitude than to our distinguished fellow-citizen, Gov. Ramsey, who came here in 1849, as the first Governor of the Territory of Minnesota, and has continued in the most active manner through all the trying periods of the growth of the state. I am sure that every one here to-night will feel, as I do, rejoicing that he is with us, so strong and so hearty. And we hope that for many years we shall see him present on occasions like this, when the old settlers are brought together.

I have been asked to speak to you on the agricultural history of Minnesota. The detailed history of agriculture in Minnesota would practically be the history of the state, and would take a great deal more time than you could spare or than I could give. We can, however, go back to the time when it was hardly considered that Minnesota was an agricultural state or that it ever was to be an agricultural state.

I see here my good friend, Gen. Le Duc,—I think you may not all know that Gen. Le Duc, in 1853, partly at his own expense and partly at the expense of the Territory, was charged with demonstrating to the rest of the country that Minnesota was not an utterly barren waste, that it was not a country limited to the raising of a few cranberries and some muskrat skins. I received a note from the General, the other evening,

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and accompanying it a history of the first exposition in New York, written by Horace Greeley. Mr. Greeley, through his newspaper, the New York Weekly Tribune (which in its day was a good agricultural authority), had satisfied himself, and tried to satisfy its readers, that Minnesota was not an agricultural territory, that it had not the soil nor the climate requisite, that everything was too near where the late Sir John Franklin met with his great trouble. Gen. Le Duc, to demonstrate that Minnesota was to be an agricultural state, was able to get a few ears of corn from Cottage Grove, possibly a dozen others from the Hon. David Gilman (raised by him, I think, at Sauk Rapids), and a few from the Fort garden at Ft. Ripley. Everything west of the Mississippi at that time was Indian country. As late as 1856, when I came here a boy, it was still considered that Minnesota might be a good country for lumber; we had a few cranberries to sell (probably 150 or 200 barrels a year), and beyond that the fur trade. The dates of payment were made when the logs came down, or at the Indian payment; and a man felt that if he could not pay at that time he could not at any other.

The first wheat that I know to have been shipped from Minnesota was in 1857, and was raised on the Le Sueur prairie. There may have been some small fields of wheat elsewhere in the state, but I have not been able to locate any of them. In 1859 there were a few thousand bushels of wheat raised, principally about Le Sueur and St. Peter. It was shipped to St. Louis by boat; I remember that W. L. Ewing & Co. were the purchasers. There was not enough to fully load a barge, and, to save the cost of transfer, the barge was taken up the Minnesota river and loaded there. The wheat was placed forward, and the balance of the load was made up of hickory hoop-poles from Chaska, so as to fill out the cargo.

In 1859 and 1860, all the grain was handled in seamless sacks; at first they started at 125 bags to a carload; then they got up to 140, and, as long as it moved in sacks, 140 sacks was the limit, a little over eight tons to the carload. Later they did without the sacks by building bulk barges, lined on the inside and with cargo boxes with covers over them to keep the grain dry; and in that way it was transported in bulk. Milwaukee was practically the market for all our grain.

In 1862 (I think I am right in the date), the first flour was shipped from Minneapolis. I remember when Eastman & Gibson commenced exporting flour. It was not considered that Minnesota flour would be accepted as genuine, and to make it genuine it was branded "Muskingum Mills, Troy, Ohio—The Genuine." I had something to do with the brand, for I remember that I cut the first stencil out of the oil-paper that I used in my manifest book as a bill clerk on the levee. By permission of S. T. Raguet (whom many of you remember, Sam Raguet), his name went to market on this first flour shipped from Minnesota. The hickory hoops, to give it the semblance of the round hoop of Ohio, were cut where the other hoops had been supplied, at Chaska, Minnesota. Within about three months after the first shipment, the quality of the flour of the "Muskingum Mills" was so very much better than the other round hoop-pole flour of Ohio that we were compelled to change the brand. Since that time it has dated from Minnesota, and the next brand of flour was "Nicollet." I remember when the form of the brand, the stencilling of the letters, and all that, were matters of great consideration.

I also remember the pleasant afternoon when the railway was just finished from Minneapolis down to the mouth of Trout brook, in St. Paul, near where the roads cross under the Third Street bridge. The railway ran down to the Mississippi river and there was a small freight station, measuring, I think, 14 by 18 or 14 by 22 feet. The first shipment consisted of fifty barrels of flour. There was a great deal of difficulty in getting the drays along the side of the railway grade, because marshy ground was crossed before reaching the end of the track where this station was. Right at the end of the track was a broad sandbar, which prevented steamboats from landing there. Between the shallow water and the hard ground of the railway, the sandbar extended some five or six hundred feet, where a man if he stood still long enough would soon be lost to sight. I remember that we took up the flour and with some cross-ties skidded it down onto the drays, and hauled them back by the gas works and around to either Sibley or Jackson street. (I am not certain that Sibley street ran through; I think it ran up and stopped in the face of the hill.) We hauled it down to the steamboat, and it was upon this occasion of the shipment

of flour that I felt we had sent out more tonnage on one boat than the cranberry crop would have furnished in a month. I remember how proud I was to ride up on the last dray bringing up the procession.

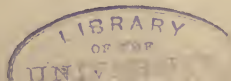
I remember the first corn that was shipped. People did not generally believe that corn would grow in Minnesota, but Gen. Sibley had a corn-field on the bottomland above Mendota and raised some 250 or 260 gunny-bags of corn. It was regarded as of sufficient importance to justify taking the St. Louis steamboat up to Mendota, to load this corn for St. Louis. I thought the General was rather a plucky man in sending out the corn and paying the rate of freight demanded; I think the rate was 35 cents a hundred to St. Louis. Although the shipment today would not be called a large one, the boat could then reasonably well afford to go on from St. Paul to Mendota in order to get 250 or 260 gunny-bags of corn.

I remember the first threshing machine and the first agricultural implements we had here,—the Manny reaper. There were about as many of them sold to Winnipeg people as we used in our own state. At that time Winnipeg was known as Ft. Garry. Settlers came down and they particularly wanted a machine that would cut hay, and used to buy these Manny harvesters or reapers. The first threshing machine that came here, I believe, was run by John Cormack. Now some of you may not know who John Cormack was, but a great many will remember him as a river raft pilot. The Pitts Company of Buffalo came up here to establish an agency, and the house for whom I was working at the time made a contract with them to try to sell three threshing machines, separators, and they asked me if I could go out and set one up. I told them I thought I could, if I could first go and see John Cormack's running. I took an old horse that we used to drive in a dray, went up back of Ft. Snelling, and found Cormack threshing, on what we used to call Eden Prairie. After looking over the machine and noting it carefully, I felt quite competent to set one up in running order, and within a few days a customer came along and I sold him a machine. I had to go a short distance this side of Shakopee to a place called Burnsville,—there was no village there then. I was young and felt a good deal of confidence in my ability to run a threshing machine; but at the

same time, as I did not want anything to go wrong, I decided that a single horse would be safe with one sweep. I tried it with one horse upon the horse-power the evening before I was to commence work, and I got it moving all right and oiled it up and looked brave. There is a great deal in having some nerve. I connected with the little spur wheel and a band on the cylinder, and before dark had the whole thing moving to my own satisfaction, and told them to bring on their men in the morning. I got up and tried the threshing machine all right, and had a man cutting bands and pushing the sheaves through. I was careful not to feed too fast, and I remember how successful I was. I gave the man satisfaction, but told him to be careful not to crowd anything that was hard through it, not to put any stones into it. The old gentleman who bought the machine was named Burns, and he told me, with a good accent, "Thru'ly its the mosht wonderful invintion." About three days afterwards he came down to tell me that somebody had dropped the monkey-wrench into the cylinder and broken out the concave. They had to get a new concave, and that opened his account for repairs. Some of you gentlemen know what repairs of agricultural implements mean.

I remember the first wheat that came from north of the Minnesota river was from St. Cloud, raised in the neighborhood of St. Joe. It brought the farmer 35 cents a bushel, and was carried by steamboat to Minneapolis and was hauled from there on wagons to the levee in St. Paul. That was about the year 1864. Now we are getting down to more recent dates. I remember going up to St. Cloud, to see that it was carefully stored. There were something like 150 bags of this wheat, and it was stored in Henry Burbank's warehouse, at what was known as the Upper Landing. I do not know whether you can find the Upper Landing in St. Cloud now, unless you have some old settler to point it out to you. A great many people do not know that there ever was a landing there, but they were very pretentious boats which then ran between Minneapolis and St. Cloud.

The agricultural history of this state is practically the history of the state. We have to look always for our wealth either to the field, the forest, the mine, or the sea. These are the four sources from which all the material wealth of the world



is drawn. Three of them we have in Minnesota, each in as good form, probably, as in any state of the Union.

Our forests are being depleted more or less rapidly, but if we would establish some better system of planting trees, I assure you that a great many hundreds of thousands of acres of land in the state that will not be profitably used for other purposes, might be used for replenishing the loss of our timber that has been so rapidly cut. The trees in Minnesota furnishing saw-timber are practically counted and measured, and the time is not far distant when Minnesota will be like some of the older states. Let us hope, however, that she will be wiser than they and will take some steps to replace the forests which contributed so much to the early wealth and settlement of the country.

Our iron mines are rich, valuable, and the most easily mined in the world. But only comparatively limited districts in Minnesota have natural wealth in either forests or mines. The greater part of the state must support its people chiefly by agriculture.

The soil of our fields is fruitful; our climate is good; we have an abundance of rainfall, and all the conditions that underlie successful farming, in Minnesota. I know of no state in the Union where a great diversity of agricultural employment can more profitably be put into effect than in Minnesota.

We are near, very near, the northernmost limit of the best growth of wheat. I believe it is an established and accepted principle that the nearer the northern limit animal or vegetable growth can be carried on, the better will be the results. The best of the spring wheat variety is grown south of the northern boundary of this state, and I think I may say that, to find it at its best, you will go thirty to fifty miles south of the northern boundary of the state. Beyond that boundary the wheat ripens before it is mature. Now I will explain what I mean when I say that it ripens before it matures. It has not had time to fill out the kernel and to finish the growth. I know that some of the millers of Minneapolis years ago tried wheat from Manitoba, raised at Portage La Prairie; and while it was a good sample, fair to look upon, the quality of the wheat did not compare with that south of the boundary. The better quality of hard wheat cannot be raised, in its best form, south of the Minnesota river. You can take a belt running from here to within

thirty or fifty miles of the northern boundary of the state, and within that belt can be raised the best quality of the hard varieties of spring wheat which bring the highest prices in the market.

We have, as I have said, an excellent climate, one adapted to the growth of all the grains and all the profitable roots and to animal growth. There is no state where better beef, pork and mutton can be raised than in the state of Minnesota. For many years I fed stock on my farm a few miles from here and exhibited the stock in the Fat Stock Show at Chicago. I think for six or seven years I was always able to carry off a full representation of the top prizes; and I think that half the time I carried off the actual first prizes for the animals on foot and for the quality of the meat of the slaughtered animal. I have probably a dozen and a half or two dozen gold medals which I have taken for fat stock fed on my farm about ten miles north of this city, exhibited in Chicago in competition with all the stock feeders and breeders from Kentucky, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio; and I know that I never found it difficult, by sending down a few animals from Minnesota (and when I say a few animals I mean five or six, showing them against six or seven hundred), to carry off either a third or a half or all of the top prizes. I remember on one occasion, when they had pleuro-pneumonia in Chicago, I did not want to send any young stock down there that I would have to bring back, and I had but one steer which I intended to enter for the beef prize. With that steer I took seven first prizes, amounting to some seven or eight hundred dollars; I took three gold medals, and I do not know how many pieces of machinery that were offered as prizes by the machine men. I think I had a patent pump, a corn drill, and a number of other things. I do know that it is perfectly within the reach of any intelligent man to send better beef, better pork, and better mutton, to the market from Minnesota than from any other state in the West. I will not except any; I have met them all, and have never failed to take my full share of premiums. When I say my full share, I took twenty times my share of prizes, although I had to hire men to feed the stock. Many of our farmers are better off than that, they can feed them themselves.

When I speak of feeding, there is the point. You must do your work intelligently. If you send a half-fed animal to market, depend upon it that you are not going to get the top price and that you will have to put up with what the other fellow will give you. Last year I had five or six hundred sheep to feed. I did not like to send them to market unless they were in good condition; I felt that I had a little reputation at stake, and I wanted to send those sheep to market in good order. After feeding them for nearly three months, I think they were as heavy as when I commenced, perhaps a little heavier; but I got out of it as well as I could, I did not ship them, I was not proud of them at all, and thought I would do better next time. Now, five hundred of them cost me about \$7.25 a day to feed. This year I am feeding twelve hundred, and they cost me less than twice as much as the five hundred, but I have an intelligent man, and he does not cost me any more than the man I had last year. I think that I got \$3.50 for my sheep last year, and I expect to get \$5.50 this year. The current price is no higher than it was then, but they will be sent to market in better order.

Minnesota has been called a wheat-field, and our farmers have been told that they can only raise wheat successfully. In the older portions of the state, southern Minnesota, that is an exploded idea; they know better. There was a time when Rochester was the champion wheat market, if not of the world, at least of Minnesota. Later on it traveled up to Red Wing, and that city for a few years was considered the champion wheat market, the largest primary wheat market in the world. Red Wing marketed, I think, in one year, of wheat bought from the farmers on her own streets, something like 1,200,000 bushels. At the present time I might mention twenty-five places whose names you would not recognize as those of important towns, where they exceed that in the Northwest; but the wheat market of Red Wing has passed away, and the farmers there are doing other and better things. The farmers in Minnesota can all give their attention to a greater diversity of interests than playing on one string.

We are glad always that the farmers are able to raise wheat, we are glad they are able to ship large quantities of wheat over our lines of railroad; but unless the raising of wheat is profit-

able to them, the carrying will not be profitable to us. That statement will always hold good. Every one here will recognize that unless the condition of the farmers of Minnesota and the Northwest is prosperous, all other interests will suffer, the banker's, the merchant's, the manufacturer's, the lawyer's, the doctor's,—everybody's. All must therefore feel an absolute interest in the prosperity of the farmer. And when I say prosperity, I mean that they shall be able to live well, educate their children, clothe and feed them, and add something to their worldly belongings year by year. If that is not the case, other interests of the state will be poor, and Minnesota will not give the results to all her citizens, both in the country and in the towns, that she ought to give.

Sometimes people have criticized the management of our railroads. As a representative of one of the large railway systems of the Northwest, I reply that we are quite willing to answer all inquiries on that ground. Everybody has a right to know just what we do. On the other hand, I feel that we have an abiding interest in the condition and progress of agriculture, because our prosperity will be determined by the intelligent use of the land. I may sell out my interests, and any other of my associates may sell out his interests, in the railway; and the farmer may sell his interest in the land; but the railway will be there and the land will be there, and the same laws and conditions that affect them to-day will affect them year after year, and they must either prosper or be poor together. I want my friends who are here to bear in mind that I say, with all good conscience, that their prosperity depends upon the prosperity of the farmer and that they have a deep interest in his welfare, not only in this world's goods but in the intelligent manner in which he cultivates his land and the intelligent manner in which he uses his time.

Years ago the State of Minnesota started an agricultural college. In the course of a few years it became an attachment to the State University and fared very badly for a time as a vote-getter for appropriations, because it was something that the agricultural interests of the state were called upon to support. Now I am very sorry to say anything that would in any way operate against the growth and extension and prosperity of the State University, and I am glad to be able to say that

lately, within the past two or three years, the State of Minnesota is taking a forward rank, through its State Experimental Farm, among the different states of the Union, and, I may say, among the experimental farms of the world. It is doing a good work, and, if it is supported by the State as it deserves to be, it will do a great deal more and a great deal better work than it has done in the past.

A year ago this winter there were some immigration meetings held through the state of Minnesota. In addressing a few of them and in thinking what I could say and what I could do, I always ran up against the question as to how far short our farmers came of doing their work under the best and most favorable conditions and how far they came short of doing themselves justice. In order that they might come and see what intelligent farming would do, I invited different counties to send a delegation of forty or fifty each, to visit the State Experimental Farm, and told them we would carry them here and back free on our railway. Now I felt that in doing this we did a wise thing, in helping them to help us. I hope that the Legislature this year will make some provision for the Experimental Farm to take care of these people when they come. They have at least to get a luncheon there, because, when they get out to the farm at ten o'clock in the morning, the day is soon gone, and it would take half the time to go and come from where they would be able to get something to eat. Last year I believe that over five thousand delegates visited the State Experimental Farm, and at twenty-five cents apiece it would take a considerable amount to give them a good wholesome luncheon.

Before I close, I would like to say a few words to the Historical Society concerning some of the interests that are uppermost in the minds of the people of the state and the most important to them. I tried to get some figures in regard to the acreage and the yield of the various crops; I could get figures partially from some counties, and not from others, up to 1894. I got what figures I could, but I will not impose them upon you, as I know they are not complete and not correct. Now think of a state like Minnesota, and an interest so important as its agriculture, with nobody anywhere in the state to gather together the statistics or figures showing what

has been done or what is being done. That is what I found. There was a time when the State, in its early and poorer days, struggling along, could and did afford a State Statistician, I think for four or five years, and we had the foundation laid of an excellent system of state statistics. But to-day the system has gone to the four winds.

Now to go back, I will give you some figures from the northern part of the State that will mark the comparative growth of the agricultural interests of northern Minnesota. We keep close statistics as to what we carry, and we report them annually to the Railway and Warehouse Commission. But what we carry comes from other states as well as Minnesota, and it is not divided. When I took the reorganized St. Paul & Pacific Railroad in the midsummer of 1879, the road had just about closed its fiscal year, and it carried 2,000,000 bushels of wheat in 1879. Of the crop of 1895 it carried 67,000,000 bushels of wheat,—thirty-three and a half times as much as sixteen years before.

In 1878, from a few miles beyond Fergus Falls (six or eight miles) we went out—just think, eighteen years ago—we went out of all settlement. Up to that limit, there were a few little houses dotted over the prairie; you might see one house where now you would count fifty. I remember that in the fall of 1878, north of Crookston, a station that will usually ship seven or eight hundred thousand or a million bushels of wheat in a good crop, there was but one house; and that house was a hole in the bank of a stream, dug out, with some poles and marsh hay thrown over the poles. It contained a cook-stove at the back end, board seats supported by little limbs of trees driven into the ground, and a man cooking. You can imagine what opportunities he had to prepare a good meal, and you can imagine what kind of a meal we had after he got it ready.

I remember that in 1878, on the Fourth of July, I crossed the international boundary between Manitoba and North Dakota, coming south toward Grand Forks, driving down over the country, locating the line of railway that strikes the boundary at Neche, on the west side of the Red river of the North. I drove forty-two miles from the international boundary, to what is now the town of Grafton. There was not one solitary house in that entire distance, and about four o'clock in the

afternoon, on the endless level prairie, one great sea of waving grass, the young man who was driving lost his nerve and told me that he was lost. He did not know where he was going, did not know whether he was going north or south or east or west, and asked me if I knew. I said, "Yes," and I took the team and kept on, and finally we came to the Park river, with its fringe of woods, where now is the prosperous town of Grafton. There was a settler there, a woman, I remember, who had a little house, probably fifteen feet square, covered with split logs (half of them turned on their backs, with the bark down, and the others laid over them); and she got me something to eat, and I compromised by sleeping beside a log in the grove with a mosquito-bar around me. That was only eighteen years ago. Grafton now is the county seat, and the assessed value of the county to-day is seven or eight millions of dollars, and I am quite sure that they do not owe any money. Certainly, if they do, they have enough to pay it with; and there are a number of such counties.

Now, up north of Devil's Lake, in a new country, settled in 1885, about ten years ago, there are railway stations whose names you would not know or recognize, that last year shipped a million or more bushels of wheat, and these people are comparatively well off. They got their land for nothing. There are men going now and getting homesteads in that country, and some are going farther west; others are buying the farms of the first settlers, the farms of the homesteaders. A great many people of the Society of German Baptists or Dunkards,—Gov. Ramsey, I have no doubt, knows the denomination, because many of them come from Pennsylvania,—good people, are settling in that country, and I am glad to say they are particularly prosperous. They are happy and well, and more will come in this year, I believe, than in any previous year.

Before I close my remarks, there are a few words that I want to impress on those present. With a climate and soil unsurpassed, we have conditions that should make us as prosperous as any other community in the West. By community I mean, in the large sense, the people of a state.

Some months ago I was down in Iowa. Riding about the country, I inquired, as I drove around through the neighborhood of Ft. Dodge, the value of land. I found that farms with

fairly good buildings were held at \$40 to \$45 an acre. With an ordinary Iowa barn, consisting of some posts and a few poles and occasionally some poorly hung, ramshackle doors, and a few boards to keep the straw from falling in thrown around the building, that kind of improvement did not enhance the value of the farm to make it attractive to the settler from the East who is accustomed to better things and a country home; and those lands were held at \$30 to \$35 an acre. Now come up to Minnesota, to lands that are equally good, as near market and with a lower rate of transportation, and what are they held at? \$15 or \$18 an acre!

Possibly someone can tell me why a good farm in Minnesota is worth no more than half the price of an equally good farm in northern Iowa. There is nothing that the Iowa farmer can raise that we cannot raise. Most of the crops that we raise to the best advantage he cannot produce so well.

The farmer in Iowa is plagued with hog cholera,—we are having more of it in this state than we ought to have. Though I for years believed it would never bother us in this state, I now know that it can be carried, even in the clothes of a man, can be carried by a dog, can be carried by sheep and cattle. I brought a carload of cows from northern Iowa last spring (dairy cattle), took them out to my farm, and within three weeks had the first case of hog cholera and lost about eighty little pigs. I quarantined at once, and, with the aid of the State Veterinarian, Dr. Reynolds, was able to stamp it out, but I might have lost my entire herd of pigs.

Now I want some of you gentlemen to tell me why a farm in Minnesota that can raise everything that a farm in Iowa can raise, and that can market it for less money, should not be worth as much in Minnesota as it is there; why land in the Red River Valley, that is richer than anything they have in the State of Iowa or in any other state, is worth only from eight to fifteen dollars an acre, or, if it is well improved, sells at the outside for twenty dollars an acre, while farms south of us sell for twice that.

The State of Minnesota does not raise as much corn as Iowa, but it raises a bigger yield per acre. We do not plant as much. I think our yield per acre is some six bushels greater than theirs. About twenty years ago people thought you could not

raise wheat in the Red River Valley, that the land was too cold and sour and wet, that it might do for grass but would not do for wheat; and, after it was demonstrated that it would raise the most bountiful crops of wheat and oats, it was then settled that it would not raise corn. But, now, for the past two seasons, I have seen corn growing in the Red River Valley, as far north as the Goose river, some forty miles north of Fargo; and I can further tell you that the best field of corn I ever saw was in the Red River Valley and in the Goose river country. It was the strongest, the most even in growth, that I ever saw, and there is no reason why, with intelligent farming, we cannot raise corn as far north as Crookston; I am certain that we can, and possibly as far north as the northern limit of the state. Well, if we can do that, what is there to prevent us from getting as much for our land in the market as the sale value of the land in the states south of us? Is there anything the matter with the land? I have not found it so; the trouble must be in the way it is used.

There are a great many small things that can be done which will help the agricultural interests of the State of Minnesota. I know of none that will help them more than to bring as many farmers as possible (not in the winter, but during the summer, when the crops are growing) to the State Experimental Farm, and to show them what intelligent work will do,—how sixteen sheep can be fed on one acre of ground and cannot eat the product of that acre; or five or six cows on one acre, without eating down the forage on that acre. Yet that is poor land; if you put a spade into it, before the spade is driven home the edge of it is in the sand. I have some of the same kind of land, and with care I know that I can get a crop every year.

I think for the past ten years I have averaged over 800 bushels of rutabaga turnips to an acre, and I plant some twenty or twenty-five acres. An excellent good fodder they make. This year I put sixty acres of corn into ensilage, about 300 tons of ensilage. Perhaps some of you may eat my "silver-plated" butter,—and it's good butter. I had an order the other day from Montana, proposing to take it all at 28 and 30 cents a pound. Any farmer who will be careful and try to do his work intelligently, with diversity of crops, stock-raising, and

dairying, can and will make his land worth as much as it is in the state south of us where there are no nearer markets than here.

Small things change the direction of these larger matters. Small differences in prices and rates of freight turn the scale of profit or loss. When we built the Great Northern Railway to the Pacific coast, we knew that it was necessary to look to Asia for a part of our traffic. I sent a trained statistician to Japan and China and kept him there a year. He brought an abstract, a manifest of every ship that entered or left their open ports for a year, and I was quite delighted at the prospect for trade with Asia. But when I came to get closer to it, closer to the question of sailing ships under our own flag, it looked different. There was a time when the United States did a large portion of the ocean-carrying trade of the world,—but when I came to consider the question of carrying the Asiatic produce under the American flag upon the sea, I found that we could not do it profitably, I found that the little yellow man could do it a great deal cheaper than we could. Therefore we made an arrangement with the general steamship company of Japan to run its steamers to Puget sound, and we had to consider how to give them loading back. There is no trouble about loading this way, for the Japanese export to our country some thirty-five million dollars' worth of their products annually, and they take from us about five million dollars annually, leaving us to pay thirty million dollars to them in gold. They have a silver standard of coinage, but when they stipulated with us that they should receive such and such divisions of through rates, they also stipulated that these should be paid in gold. I asked the gentleman whether they were not silver people; he said, "We *pay* in silver!" They pay their people in silver, but they make other people pay them in gold. We were able to establish a rate on flour to load their ships back that was a low rate comparatively, quite a low one. It was not as low as the rate on the Atlantic ocean, but for the Pacific ocean, compared with the rates charged by the line subsidized heavily by our own government, a much lower rate. Now the result of that was to open a market in Asia for substantially all the wheat raised on the Pacific coast.

You may ask me how that concerns us. Well, I must reply that it concerns us very materially. The whole world, commercially speaking, is not as large as the states of the Union were before the Civil War. It is not so far from anywhere in the world to any other place in the world, considering the time or expense, as it was from Boston to San Francisco before the war. When we can send all the export wheat of the entire Pacific coast to Asia, to be eaten by people who heretofore have lived almost wholly on rice, we have just to that extent helped our farmers in the East. The wheat that heretofore went from San Francisco round the Horn to Europe does not go there now, and it is not competing to the extent of a bushel this year. I think I am safe in saying that there will be more wheat exported this year to Asia and eaten by the Asiatics than the greatly dreaded Argentine Republic will send to Europe; and that alone makes for our people an advance of, say, ten or twelve cents out of the thirty cents that wheat is higher than it was last year. I think it will account for fully one-third of the fact that Walla Walla and California wheat is not competing in Europe.

There are a great many things that could be said in regard to bettering the condition of our agriculture, but, as I remarked in beginning to speak, it would be the history of the state, and I will not take any more of your time to-night. In conclusion, I wish to thank you for your attention, and I hope that I have not wearied you.



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